

U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Diplomatic Security
San Francisco Field Office

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Adoption Fraud by Focus On Children Inc.

Good afternoon, my name is Tom Depenbrock and I am the Special-Agent-in-Charge of the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security San Francisco Field Office. Agents from the Diplomatic Security Service have worked closely with the U.S. Attorney's Office in Salt Lake City and Immigration and Customs Enforcement for more than 16 months on the case against Focus on Children, Inc. Let me add my personal "Thank You" for the team effort from all the investigators involved.

I am here today to deliver a clear message from the State Department. Adoption Fraud is a particularly reprehensible crime under any circumstance. In the case before us, the circumstances are unusually cruel. For the birth parents in Samoa, who believed they were only temporarily releasing their children, the pain is palpable. For the adoptive parents accepting children they were told were uncared for and in need of good homes, the deceit is shocking. And for the children, the most innocent of all the victims, the truth about their adoptions threatens to be destabilizing. It is a soulless, heartbreaking misuse of trust and confidence visited on those who are most vulnerable. And inexcusable.

- Taking advantage of others for private financial gain is not unique, but it does point out we have a federal obligation to be on the watch for attempts to take advantage of those most vulnerable.
- These crimes threaten the U.S. legal immigration process and the integrity of this system for others who abide by U.S. immigration laws.

Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) Special Agents have traveled thousands of miles for over 50 interviews and meetings on this case: to Samoa twice, to New Zealand twice, to 13 US cities and to three locations to conduct search warrants. DSS Special Agents have relentlessly examined tens of thousands of computer files with at least 2100 man-hours expended working this case. Worth every rigorous minute of effort, everyone felt the compelling nature of expending their utmost to bring those who have committed such serious crimes to justice.

In sum, adoption fraud crimes are especially heinous and those who commit such offenses must face formidable consequences. Diplomatic Security is firmly committed to working with the U.S. Attorney's Office and other law enforcement agencies around the world to fight adoption fraud, and bring those who commit these crimes to justice. Thank you.